

Wm L. E. Richards
 Pastor
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Each Pastor a Witness for or against his People.

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EACH PASTOR A WITNESS FOR OR AGAINST HIS PEOPLE.

A
S E R M O N

DELIVERED IN

ST. MATTHEW'S CHURCH, JERSEY CITY,

On the Sunday after the Funeral

OF THE

REVEREND EDMUND D. BARRY, D. D.,

RECTOR.

BY J. J. BOWDEN,

ASSISTANT MINISTER.

NEW YORK:

C. SHEPARD & CO.,
152 FULTON STREET.



JERSEY CITY, May 25th, 1852.

REV. AND DEAR SIR:—

At a meeting of the Vestry of St. Matthew's Church, held on the 18th inst., you were requested by a unanimous vote, to furnish for publication, a copy of the sermon delivered by you, on the Sunday following the demise of our late Rector, the Rev. Dr. E. D. Barry.

The undersigned were, at the same time, appointed a committee to procure its publication in case you see proper to comply with our request.

Believing that the beautiful tribute paid by you, to the memory of one whom we dearly love, will be perused with profit by all who were intimate with the deceased, and treasured by them as a memento of his excellence, we respectfully urge that you accede to the wishes, not only of the Vestry, but, as we believe, of your entire congregation.

We remain,

Rev. and Dear Sir,

Your Friends and Parishioners,

J. C. BRAUTIGAM.

J. R. LAWRENCE.

T. W. JAMES.

To Rev. J. J. BOWDEN.

JERSEY CITY, May 26th 1852.

MY DEAR FRIENDS:—

In reply to your kind note, permit me to say that the sermon referred to was, of necessity, rapidly written, and also without any view to publication. I send the manuscript without any alteration, only begging that my parishioners will kindly bear in mind the difference between a style of writing suitable for perusal, and such a style as is adapted to public speaking.

Most truly and affectionately,

Your Friend and Pastor,

J. J. BOWDEN.

Messrs.

J. C. BRAUTIGAM.

J. R. LAWRENCE.

T. W. JAMES.



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S E R M O N .

“ Behold, I and the children which God hath given me.”—*Hebrew ii. 13.*

Although, as a general rule, we regard funeral sermons with no very hearty approval, because they are, for the most part, full of unmerited eulogium, and indiscriminating praise ; yet now we feel that silence would be injustice to the memory of the dead—an act of violence to your feelings and to our own. Since the last Lord’s day we have gathered together, in this house of prayer, to bestow the rites of sepulture on the remains of one whose venerable age and eminent piety ; whose earnest steadfastness in all good works ; whose singleness and simplicity of heart, demands from us an audible testimony to his christian excellence. And we render it the more readily, because we are thus summoning back to earth another witness to the sanctifying and peace-giving power of that christian faith which, for many long years, he set forth in words and exemplified in action. We render it the more readily, because we are thus discharging our duty as a son in Christ Jesus ; for as a son we have endeavored to walk by his side in the ministry of the Gospel ; to profit by his example, his wisdom and experience. We render it the more boldly, because we thus give utterance to the common feelings of a congregation, a com-

munity; and of all that throng who were gathered here to testify their love and reverence for the pious and gentle old man, in whose heart age had frozen up none of the springs of human sympathy, but who, even to the last, was ready to "rejoice with them that did rejoice, and weep with them that weep." We render it the more peacefully, because we know that another name is added to the long roll of those, who because "they have turned many to righteousness," shall "shine as the stars, forever and ever"—another soul joined to that great multitude, whose voice St. John heard, "like the voice of many waters" giving praise.

I am conscious that I speak to day to many who knew the deceased in earlier years, and have therefore had better opportunities of estimating his character and appreciating his many noble qualities. I will therefore confine myself to the time, during which I have been brought into close and intimate relation with him, and will endeavor to convey to the minds of others my own impression of the more striking points of his character. But first, brethren, permit me a few words as to his life, from its beginning to its end—and a few more as to its close. You have heard a sketch of his career from an abler hand and a more eloquent tongue.* You must agree with me, that like a statue from the hand of some great master, his life, from childhood to old age, was complete in all its parts; symmetrical in all its proportions. How gratefully should we uplift our voices in solemn thanksgiving to the Great Sculptor, who has thus again proved His power to change the rough and unhewn stone of the natural man into a living form of sanctified loveliness, not unworthy to stand forever in the holy city of our God! He, who for so many years, faithfully filled the office

*The Right Reverend Bishop Doane, who delivered the address at his funeral.

of Rector of this church, was, as you have heard, a reverent and filial child—a modest yet self-relying young man—a most kind and considerate husband—a most loving and gentle father—a faithful and most successful teacher. He was firm in his friendship, and strong in his affections; the frost of age could not chill the perennial springs of his heart. He was, as you know, most forgiving and forgetful of unkindness and injuries. Decided in his own theological views; a true son of the Church wherein he ministered; he was most tolerant to others, and no man ever heard from his lips an uncharitable judgment or a harsh condemnation.

But more than all this, he had long ago attained to a repentance never to be repented of, a faith strong unto death, and a sanctification that radiated around him the beautiful light of holiness. He loved the Lord Jesus in sincerity as his Master, Redeemer, his best, everlasting friend. Nor could he ever read the record of that mysterious love wherewith Christ loved us; that unimaginable agony whereby he bought our souls without deep emotion, and an utterance broken by tears. But why should I spend the time to tell you that he died in perfect peace? Could a life of faith and love, and steadfast exertion, be ended by aught else than a death of joyous and unclouded assurance? Are not the promises of God most certain; are not his everlasting arms wreathed beneath every such servant to support him in his last hour?

His was a long dying—six months of slow decay; and like one who felt that the angel sent to summon him might come at any moment, he was ever moving upwards to meet the celestial messenger; drawing nearer of his own accord to that hour when he should go to be “forever with the Lord.”

He became, day by day, even more gentle, more affectionate, more grateful for even the least attention or courtesy

from those who were bound by every tie to minister to his wants.

It was a touching sight to witness the gracious outpouring of acknowledgment wherewith he more than repaid each little reverent kindness from his own children.

Brethren, you have lost one who held some of you, in infancy, at the font, and hath since then signed on your children's forehead the sign of the cross. You have lost one who taught your own young hearts to love the Redeemer, and, as years rolled by, hath gathered around him, and spoken with gentle words, and looked with loving eyes on your little ones; you have lost one who carried you baek to former years, and recalled the sweet memories of your childhood's home and your mother's voice. And I have lost the friend of three generations, who took council with my grandfather, and instructed my father, and now, in old age, hath lived to welcome me to this ministry; to guide me by his experience; to council me by his wisdom, and to love the descendant of the friend of his youth. Blessed be God who hath given me grace to contribute, in some small measure, to the peace and comfort of his declining years; to watch over his last hours, and to close his eyes in death, and, if in his grave I did not drop some tears, I were either less or more than a man. And now, brethren, as a matter of simple justice, I draw you to witness this my testimony, that nothing more than the respect due to venerable age; the reverence due to a faithful minister; the courtesy due to a christian gentleman; nothing more than this was needed to enable us to live together in affection, to work together in harmony. I vindicate him from even that slight censure that old age had brought with it its usual infirmities; I assert that no man, in even early manhood, or

the noon of life, was ever more gentle, more considerate, more forbearing, more richly courteous, and now—

“ Since to the common lot that crowns or days,
 Called in the eve of life the good man goes,
 And full of years and ripe in wisdom, lays
 His silver temples in their last repose ; ”

while the unfaded memories of yesterday call back the grey hair and venerable form, and kindly smile of one, who now sleeps in Jesus, let me try to convey to your apprehension, as vividly as I can, the two qualities which made the deepest impression on my own mind, and which gave to his character its peculiar individuality.

First, his perfect guilelessness ; his unconsciousness of evil ; that beautiful confidence in his fellows ; that charity that “ believeth all things, hopeth all things.”

There are many men who pride themselves upon such a knowledge of all the depths of human depravity, such foresight against all the devices of evil men, as guards them against fraud and imposition. In fact it is impossible for most men to dwell for many years on earth, and mingle with all classes, without losing, in a great measure, the freshness of youthful confidence ; the kindly, trustful heart, wherewith a noble and ingenuous nature goes forth into the battle of life. We see so much of evil ; we detect so much of sinister motive in what strike us at first as the purest actions ; we sometimes suffer so heavily from trusting to others ; we are often so deeply wounded where we have placed our best affection, that without strong efforts to the contrary, the heart grows cold and contracts, and we look on our fellows with a suspicious eye. Now when all the fresh outpouring of childhood’s heart, all the fulness of youthful confidence, is carried on through a life of great changes and vicissitudes ; when a man who has been tried

by the extremes of both good and evil fortune, is yet in old age as frank and cordial and trustful as in early youth, it proves a high and noble heart ; a nature approaching more nearly than that of most men to human nature before the fall, ere sin and sad experience had taught man to know and dread evil. Shrewd men would smile at such a trait, and worldly men despise it ; but tried by a loftier standard than the world's opinion, we are forced to regard it as beautiful and most attractive. This was the characteristic which struck me so forcibly in him whom God hath taken from us. This was the trait which justifies us in saying of him as the Lord Jesus said of Nathaniel, " Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile."

The other feature in his character which impressed itself upon, not me only, but all with whom he came in contact, was his warmth and kindliness of heart. Never from any heart was there a more large and perennial outpouring of all human affections and sympathies. How quickly his cheek was flushed, and his eyes suffused at every tale of sorrow or suffering ?

Brethren, one and all of you will bear witness, how in your hour of affliction he was always at hand to comfort you ; his eye dimmed by fast coming tears ; his utterance faltering from emotion ; and how earnestly he told you of a coming world, where trouble and sorrow would find no place. It was this striking characteristic which rendered him so firm in his friendships—so fervent in his affections—so forgiving of injuries. Resentment and a sense of injustice could not dwell long in a heart so filled to overflowing with all gentle and kindly emotions. It was this which gave to his greeting such earnest cordiality.

Hence to his manly resolution of character was added all the thoughtful consideration of a true-hearted woman for

the feelings of others; that sensitive tenderness that shrinks from doing or saying aught that can give even a momentary pain to another.

Combine these two qualities of which I have spoken, that guilelessness and unconsciousness of evil, that tenderness and warmth of heart, and do we not approximate to our conception of the "disciple whom Jesus loved?"

Are not these exactly the natural traits of character which attracted to St. John the warmest affection of his blessed master. And of all that have survived the fall, do not these qualities come nearest to what we imagine to ourselves of those sinless beings who surround the throne of God?

And now, brethren, let us thank God that He has given us another evidence that "His arm is not shortened, that it cannot save," nor the power of the spirit lessened that it cannot sanctify; that He has so long spared one of His servants to go in and out among us, to win souls to Christ by the beauty of holiness, and that at last his soul passed away to Paradise, in tranquil sleep, unconscious of pain, and unmoved by the tears of those who watched by his side.

"Peace to the good man's memory,—let it grow
Greener with years, and blossom through the flight
Of ages; let the mimic canvass show
His calm benevolent features; let the light
Stream on his deeds of love, that shunned the sight
Of all but Heaven, and in the book of fame.
The glorious record of his virtues write,
And hold it up to men, and bid them claim
A palm like his, and catch from him the hallowed flame of godliness."

And now, brethren, that we have spoken of the dead, we would, with all solemn earnestness, speak to the living—to the souls of those for whom he labored, watched and prayed.

We call your attention to the text, "Behold, I and the children which God hath given me." St. Paul, in his letter

to the Hebrews, quotes this passage from Isaiah, to prove that the Redeemer and the Redeemed are partakers of the same flesh and blood—sharers of a common humanity.

They are the words wherewith, as the Prophet foretells, the Lord Jesus will present himself and his brethren before his Father's throne—Here are the children whose souls and bodies I have bought ; for whose salvation I have wrestled through sorrow and agony and death.

As these words are applicable in the first instance, and especially to the Saviour, so are they also applicable to all his Apostles and Evangelists and faithful Ministers. With these words will all who have labored for the salvation of souls come before their Master—"Behold I, and the children which God hath given me." We read that each one, who earnestly sets forth the truths of the Gospel, becomes thereby to some, a savor of life unto life ; to others, a savor of death unto death. Every messenger of the Lord Jesus will hereafter rise up before the judgment seat as a witness, for, or against, all to whom this message has been delivered. If there is a heavy responsibility laid upon all those who are called to this ministry, and a crown of glory reserved for those who are faithful to the end ; so, upon all who hear there is also a duty resting, and a place of rest promised to those who obey. Therefore, men and brethren, I pray you to reflect upon your relation to him whom Jesus hath called to his eternal home. I warn you that the account between you and him remains to be adjusted on the judgment morning. For many long years he has gone in and out among you, speaking to you of "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. He has spoken to you in joy and in sorrow ; when your hearts were elated by prosperity, and when they were softened by affliction. He has stood up beside your dead, and warned you, with all the solemn fervency of an

earnest heart, that you too must die, and that after death cometh the judgment.

He has gathered you together in this house of prayer, and unfolded the mysteries of the Gospel ; he has told you of your fallen and sinful nature ; of the great love wherewith his Master loved you ; of his life of toil and suffering, and his death on the cross to save you ; of the place of rest and peace which he has prepared ; that goal of the Pilgrim ; that gathering place of the Saints ; that eternal home of Believers.

He has told you of the joy of the redeemed ; of the misery of the lost, and urged you night and day with tears. He has showed you in life the beauty of holiness, and manifested in death the peace of the believer.

And now his pulse is still, his voice is hushed, his work on earth done ; his soul has gone to await in Paradise the hour of the final resurrection and the judgment.

Throw yourselves forward into the future ; the trumpet of the Arch-Angel has rung through the sky, and from the earth arise the children of Adam to meet their judge. Once more that gray hair and venerable form are seen.

Will he gather you among the number of his children and say before the Redeemer's throne, " here am I and the children thou hast given me ; " or will he rise up to bear a damning testimony to your impenitence and unbelief ; to mark you out as those on whom the entreaties and warnings, of many years were thrown away ? Men and brethren ponder this solemn question, and may his death be the turning point of your life.

LET US PRAY.

O, Blessed Lord Jesus, who has given thy servant grace to triumph over the world and the flesh, and taken him hence in

peace, grant that the recollection of his teaching may lead us to believe, and the memory of his holy life may strengthen us to exertion, that we may hereafter be numbered among his children, and share his everlasting rest.

